

Statement of Frederico Juarbe, Jr.

Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training

Submitted for the Record to the Subcommittee on Benefits,

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

April 30, 2003

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the "Veterans Earn and Learn Act." This initiative offers updates to the G.I. Bill that would ensure that on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs are in step with the requirements of the 21st Century Workforce. It would also ensure that these programs better support the needs of military veterans of the All Volunteer Force as they enter civilian employment.

This law could help the Department of Labor better achieve its mission in a number of ways:

1. It makes on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs that reflect today's workplace more accessible to today's veteran population by standardizing the way VA pays these benefits.
2. It encourages a higher rate of veteran participation in on-the-job training and apprenticeships. Because of the family commitments of today's veterans, they must earn while they learn in their transition to civilian life.
3. It authorizes competency-based criteria for attainment of journeyman status in place of exclusively time-based apprenticeships. This is more in tune with the credentialing models of today.

4. It helps employers hire and retain skilled workers by bridging military and civilian skill-sets for the purposes of licensing and certification.
5. It will require collaboration and coordination between the Departments of Defense, Veterans' Affairs and Labor to ensure military-acquired competencies are recognized in civilian workplaces.

The Department supports the goals of this bill, in keeping with its efforts to meet the demands of the 21st Century Workforce. The cost for this program, however, is not included in the President's budget and offsets would have to be found.

In conclusion, I want to thank you and the Committee for the opportunity to provide our input on this important piece of legislation.